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SUBJECT: UNSC/SUDAN: PALLOR HANGS OVER MEMBERS' ASSESSMENT
OF ABUJA PROSPECTS

REF: 04/18/2006 BRUNO-DEPARTMENT E-MAIL

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN R. BOLTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. At an April 18 open briefing to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), African Union (AU) Special Envoy to the Abuja Peace Talks Salim Ahmed Salim, with what seemed like a false sense of security and optimism, proclaimed Darfur peace negotiations to be in the 'home stretch,' with a conclusion on the horizon for April 130. Most SC Members, however, did not share Salim's rosy view, and expressed skepticism and pessimism about Abuja prospects and the future of Darfur. Salim's rebuttal was longer than his initial presentation, as if he needed to convince not only SC Members of his perspective, but to re-assure himself as well. In response to Ambassador Bolton's questions about the Abuja parties' incentives for reaching an agreement by April 30, especially in light of the failed accords which had preceded this deadline, Salim offered only the prospects of a respite from the constant international scrutiny and pressure to which the Government of National Unity is currently subjected and the decreased chances of rebel movements' fragmentation. The issue of the need for Sudanese consent of an eventual UN mission in Darfur was repeatedly raised by the usual suspects (notably Russia and Qatar), despite a growing refrain among other Members about the need for expedited transition of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to a UN operation. Based on the tenor of today's meeting, it seemed that Sudanese intransigence on AMIS transition, tensions on the Chadian border, stalling over implementation of UNSCR 1591 (2005) sanctions provisions and doubt over the sustainability of an Abuja accord have taken their cumulative toll. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

SALIM: ABUJA SITUATION IS 'RIPE FOR RESOLUTION'

12. (SBU) Per his statement contained in refmail, AU Special Envoy to the Abuja Peace Talks Salim was unexpectedly upbeat in his assessment of prospects for a peace accord, despite what he acknowledged would be 'further frustrations' in the slowly-evolving process. Salim paid tribute to the helpful

role of Sudanese Vice President Taha, who remained in Abuja after Salim's departure for New York, in moving the peace process forward where the Government of National Unity (GNU) had previously shown itself inflexible, such as on the principle of integration (NOTE. Recent reporting has indicated Taha may not in fact be completely representative of the Khartoum position, especially that of President Bashir, but Salim made no allusion to this. END NOTE). Salim was also impressed with First Vice President Salva Kiir's success in providing confidence to the rebel movements in Abuja to provide momentum to the talks. Salim was optimistic that there would be a 'package' by the end of April but noted four outstanding issues to be resolved: first, assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs); second, a formula for transfers from the Sudanese government to States; third, seed money for the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund; and fourth, compensation for the victims of the Darfur conflict.

13. (SBU) Salim noted that agreement on security arrangements would be a complex undertaking that had no 'quick fix' solution but that was nonetheless experiencing slow progress.

The challenge, according to Salim, would be to bring along the rebel movements, who were still distrustful of the GNU's intentions and hesitant to commit to an enhanced ceasefire agreement until they could envision the end goal of a comprehensive Abuja peace agreement. Salim encouraged rebel movement leaders to remain engaged, as partners (like SRSG Pronk, SYG Annan and the 'UN family') had been. Salim made a specific plea for the Council to help resolve problems between Chad and Sudan, which, he observed, were having a direct bearing on Abuja Talks.

14. (C) Salim spoke forcefully about the nature of the April 30 agreement being sought, emphasizing the meticulousness of

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the AU mediation in formulating an agreement that would conform to international standards but that would also have elements on status of forces and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) incorporated in tandem with an enhanced ceasefire agreement. He admitted that he had previously underestimated the importance of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation element in the Talks and that its resolution was not as simple as he had anticipated, given the divergent interpretations of it by the GNU and the rebel movements. Salim viewed the AU-generated April 30 deadline as 'realistic.'

MEMBERS NOT SO SURE

15. (C) With the major exception of the African SC Members, notably Congolese PR Ikouebe, most SC Members expressed skepticism and pessimism about Abuja prospects and the future of Darfur. Ikouebe was pleased to hear Abuja negotiations were in the 'home stretch' and shared Salim's 'cautious optimism,' which he noted was a far cry from the frustrated tone Salim had used in his January 13 briefing to the Council. Ikouebe stressed the importance of enhancing AMIS' capacities in advance of any Abuja agreement and a transition to a UN operation. Ghanaian PR Effah-Apenteng concurred with the need to strengthen AMIS before the conclusion of a peace agreement and stressed the need to make the Abuja parties abide by their obligations under such an agreement. Tanzanian PR Mahiga (whose delegation was supporting Salim's travel) was equally encouraged by Salim's optimism about Abuja agreement and declared it was incumbent upon the international community to ensure the negotiations succeeded.

16. (C) Other delegations, however, did not share Salim's rosy view and raised numerous concerns. French PR de La Sabliere, even before making his formal remarks, told Ambassador Bolton he was 'shocked' to hear Salim say that everything was fine in Abuja. UK Deputy PR Thomson was similarly surprised, raising questions about the effects that destabilization along the Chad border, GNU opposition to a UN technical

assessment mission, deteriorating humanitarian conditions and diminishing SC impact had on the Abuja process. De La Sabliere urged closer inspection of the 'quality' of any agreement to come from Abuja, noting that problems in this accord would translate into problems for the eventual UN Darfur force. De La Sabliere was especially concerned about the effect that Chad/Sudan instability was having in Abuja, as well as the absence of complete rebel representation. He also asked how long the Darfur-Darfur dialogue would require for conclusion and wanted to know what impact GNU opposition to AMIS transition would have on the peace process.

¶7. (C) Ambassador Bolton expressed hope that the Abuja outcome would be positive, but noted that much remained to be done to ensure this result. He asked Salim about parties' incentives to come to agreement by April 30, when previous agreements, such as the 2004 N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement, had missed the mark. Beyond reaching consensus, parties would be required to sustain any agreement, and Ambassador Bolton solicited Salim's views on parties' potential for success in doing this. In response, Salim offered only respite from the constant international scrutiny and pressure to which the Government of National Unity is currently subjected and decreased chances of rebel movements' fragmentation as such incentives.

¶8. (C) Russia and China acknowledged that progress in Abuja Talks, achieved through support to the AU, was the key to Darfur peace, with Chinese PR Wang insisting that lack of rebel unity was the major stumbling block to peace. Chinese and Russian positions on related aspects of Darfur came through clearly in these interventions: Wang said that only when a comprehensive peace agreement was reached in Abuja could the UN take over for AMIS in Darfur and stressed enhanced support to the AU. Russian DPR Dolgov asked if April 30 were too ambitious a deadline for an agreement, suggesting that additional time could be needed, which would

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further impede progress on AMIS transition in the Council.

SANCTIONS

¶9. (C) Prior to Salim's briefing, Ambassador Bolton raised privately with Salim the USG position on accelerating movement on measures under UNSCR 1591 (2005) to avoid a 'dereliction' of SC responsibility in condoning bad behavior by spoilers of the peace process. Salim, however, dodged the bullet (joking that he hoped the decision would be made when he had departed New York) and was ambiguous in his response, saying, as he later did to the broader Council, that while he supported sanctions as a tool to help the situation on the ground, it would ultimately be up to 'the wisdom of the Council' to decide on the appropriate time to apply such measures. That statement was greeted by audible chuckles around the Council table. Salim acknowledged the advantages of sanctions as sending a powerful message that would maintain the Council's credibility, as well as the disadvantages, which would be to risk hardening the positions of those negotiating in Abuja.

¶10. (C) Peruvian PR de Rivero, UK DPR Thomson and French PR de La Sabliere all spoke to the need for targeted sanctions as a way to maintain Council credibility in the eyes of Abuja negotiators and to lend clarity to the SC's and AU's processes. Russian Deputy PR Dolgov, however, warned the Council against taking any steps that could jeopardize the negotiating process; e.g., targeted sanctions. The Qatari representative advised that the Council had more effective options at its disposal besides sanctions, citing a possible Council visit. Chinese PR Wang made no specific comment but agreed (as did other Members) in subsequent consultations to discuss the four names in a previously scheduled April 19 Sudan Sanctions Committee meeting and to convene informal SC consultations on the subject on the same day.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST AMIS TRANSITION PERSIST

¶11. (C) Salim aligned himself with what he called the 'clear' and 'unambiguous' March 10 communique of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), adding if the SC wanted to take action on Darfur, then it should. He said the decision on what type of action would be up to the Council. Salim acknowledged that while some of the GNU's opposition to AMIS transition was 'credible,' some of it was 'irresponsible but nonetheless the fact remained that the Council must persuade the GNU to accept the UN presence in Darfur. He emphasized that the 'preponderant' African position was that a UN force would come after AMIS.

¶12. (C) Delegations that called for an expeditious transition of the AU Darfur force (including Greece, Peru, the UK, Argentina, Denmark and Slovakia) inquired about what could be done to sway the opinion of the GNU in this direction, to which Salim advised engaging with both the GNU and the rebel movements, which were especially problematic when divided. Qatar raised the possibility of inciting public opinion were the Council to force its hand on re-hatting, and Russia insisted that no UN peacekeepers could be deployed without GNU consent and cooperation. Japanese PR Oshima said that while the Council must consider modalities of transition, the 'minimum requirement' for such transition would be Abuja progress and that dispatching the UN's technical assessment team would require GNU consent.

CHAD IS FURTHER COMPLICATION

¶13. (C) Salim drew a direct link between the situation in Chad and the situation in Darfur, urging the Council to do its utmost to normalize relations between N'djamena and Khartoum, as the problem between the countries was bigger than just Chad's withdrawal as an Abuja mediator (NOTE. Salim dismissed the possibility of substituting Eritrea as a mediator in place of Chad, but commented on the key role Libya played in this capacity. END NOTE). Delegations were

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extremely concerned about the humanitarian impact of escalating tensions on the border and their effect on the Abuja process. Russia called for Council endorsement of the Tripoli Agreement.

BOLTON